

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C., May 7, 1934.

The eleventh meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1934 was held in its office in the Navy Department Building on Monday, May 7, 1934. The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Swartwout,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Howells,
Mr. Coolidge,
also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer,

Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. It was a special meeting called to consider---

1. PLANS FOR ENLARGING THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT: On May 2, 1934, sketches were received from the National Park Service, Interior Department, for enlarging the Executive Office Building, consisting of Basement, First and Second Floor plans. The following statement accompanied the sketches:

The President finds it necessary to provide additional office space for the Executive Office force. He believes that this can be accomplished best by building an addition to the present Executive Office.

The preliminary plans submitted herewith cover the general scheme, Of course, a more detailed layout and study will undoubtedly develop a number of improvements in the treatment of the architectural features.

In general the plan is to extend the upper portion of the building about 36 feet to the south and to carry the basement 86 feet south. The basement will extend 50 feet beyond the upper portion. The same general style of architecture will be continued throughout. The President has requested that as few as possible changes be made in the existing building. It will be necessary, however, to make quite a few changes in the basement in order to obtain the maximum usable office space. The main structural features such as the roof trusses and bearing walls have been left intact as far as possible.

At the meeting of the Commission, the National Park Service was represented

by Lieut. E. P. Locke, Corps of Engineers, detailed to White House duty, Mr. Charles E. Peterson, chief of the Eastern Division, Mr. Lorenzo Winslow, architect, and Mr. John L. Nagle, Engineer.

The Commission discussed the project thoroughly, and regretted that the additional office space could not be provided at once by remodeling the State, War and Navy Building as an Executive Office Building. However, the Commission realized that the sum of \$3,000,000 needed for this project could not be secured at the present time, and the need of the President for additional office space was urgent, as there are about 100 employes in the existing building, which is 100 feet square. It was stated that the President receives on an average of 5,000 letters a day and Mrs. Roosevelt 1,000. The Commission thereupon proceeded to consider the sketches. Lieut. Locke explained that the sketches he was presenting embodied suggestions made by the President himself, and that it was very desirable to have an approval of plans for this project as soon as possible, so that the work could be done during summer months while the President is away.

Mr. Eric Gugler, architect, of New York City, had been requested by Mrs. Roosevelt to confer with the Commission as to the project, and he was present at the meeting. Mr. Gugler was then called upon to give his view of the project. Mr. Gugler said:

"I think the Executive Office building is bigger now than Mr. McKim wanted it to be. I think it is a charming little building. I think an extension to the south 36 feet puts it into the warehouse class. I regret the thought of that building being enlarged in that way. I think there is plenty of space to adjust this matter without materially changing the design of the building. I have made a sketch which would extend the Executive Office building eastward and take up vacant space adjacent to the Garden. I would have a model made to determine the scale. Also I have a different scheme for the proposed basement extension south of the building."

Thereupon Mr. Moore asked Mr. Nagle whether there was any objection to

raising the roof of the building, so as to provide an additional office floor. Mr. Nagle replied "No.". Mr. Gugler said, "That is the best thing to do."

The Commission felt Mr. Gugler's plan had real merit and should be drawn out. Also, Mr. Nagle should make a study of the requirements to raise the roof and provide an additional office floor on the main floor of the building. It was thought this would not involve raising the roof more than two or three feet.

The Commission then decided to visit the White House grounds and consider the project there. On inspecting the grounds south of the Executive Office building the Commission felt unanimously that it would be unfortunate to extend the building 36 feet south, and then 50 feet further for a basement floor. The Commission felt this would be unsightly and would be disproportionate to the White House itself. Also it would mean cutting down several large trees.

Mr. Gugler's scheme was thereupon considered. The Commission noted the unused garden space east of the Executive Office building and felt the building might well be extended eastward, with the understanding that the roof would be raised to provide an additional office floor, and that the entire scheme be carefully studied out to be in harmony with the West Terrace. Mr. Gugler felt it might require taking in one bay of the West Terrace.

The Commission then considered the question of providing office space for the Social Staff of the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt had informed Mr. Moore that she did not wish to have office space for the Social Staff included in that to be provided for the Executive Office, and that she preferred to have office rooms built on part of the East Terrace. The Commission considered a suggestion of Mr. Gugler to use part of the cloak room, by excavating under the East Terrace. Also the question of erecting a small building immediately north of the East Terrace was considered. However, the Commission finally decided that it would be best to raise the roof of the pavilion at the end of

the East Terrace sufficiently to provide an additional office floor; to rearrange the main floor of the pavilion; and to excavate under it for rooms of the attendants. In this way the 30 clerks of the Social Staff could be accommodated in a satisfactory manner.

It was thought desirable to confer at least with one of the President's Secretaries regarding the project, and the Commission decided to call on Hon. Marvin H. McIntyre. Mr. McIntyre, on being informed of the project, decided that the Commission should confer with President Roosevelt about the matter. The President expressed his desire to see the Commission and very cordially received the members. During the interview the President first of all told of his desire to remodel the State, War and Navy Building, close West Executive Avenue; and build a tunnel under it to connect the White House with that building and use it for an Executive Office Building; however, he said, money for this project is not available at the present time but it is a project for the future. The plan to enlarge the existing Executive Office building is to meet a present emergency.

Mr. Moore, speaking for the Commission, said the Commission desired to comply with the wishes of the President to provide the additional office space needed, and that this is to be done without detriment to the appearance of the White House grounds or offices. Mr. Moore assured the President that he is to get what he wants.

After luncheon at the Cosmos Club, the Commission returned to the Office to resume the session, and considered in particular three propositions:

- (a) To extend the building southward according to the plans submitted by Lieut. Locke.
- (b) To extend the building eastward and rearrange the building according to the suggestion of Mr. Gugler.
- (c) To raise the roof of the existing building, and extend it eastward.

The Commission discussed these several propositions and finally decided

that the roof of the existing building should be raised by about three feet, with a set-back, so as to provide an additional office floor; and that the building should be extended eastward instead of southward. The Commission also took note of the fact that when the White House was restored in 1901 the work was supervised with extreme care by Mr. McKim, of the firm of McKim, Mead and White. Thus, likewise in this project the Commission felt the work should be in charge of a competent architect, and the Commission therefore urged the appointment of Mr. Eric Gugler as the architect of the project, with authority to submit the plans to the Commission of Fine Arts. The pavilion at the east end is to be raised to provide additional office space for the Social Staff.

The Commission expressed their appreciation of the assistance rendered by Lieut. Locke, Mr. Winslow, and by Mr. Gugler. A report was sent to the President, setting forth the recommendations of the Commission, and expressing their appreciation of the interview with him as to the project (Exhibit A).

The Commission adjourned at 4:30 p.m., to meet May 28th, in Washington.

C O P Y

COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
Washington

May 8, 1934.

Dear Mr. President:

The Commission of Fine Arts have had presented to them convincingly the need for more space for the Executive Offices of the White House. Various tentative plans to meet the requirements have been prepared by your representatives. At a special meeting of the Commission called for the purpose on May 7, all these plans were considered on the grounds of the White House, with the help of the men who prepared the plans. A full and free discussion followed.

It was agreed (as stated to you by the members of the Commission yesterday) that a way can be found to secure all the additional space needed, without seriously encroaching on the grounds, and without detriment to the appearance of the White House.

The methods of securing these desirable results have been unanimously and heartily agreed to by all those concerned in the preparation of the enlargement plans as well as by the members of the Commission of Fine Arts. Briefly stated, these methods involve the enlargement of the present office building by turning the present western terrace to the south; and by a small but entirely sufficient lifting of the roof of the office building. A small change in the eastern terrace will provide needed room for the clerical force dealing with social activities.

This advice is conditioned on the employment of an architect of experience and reputation to design the new structures and to give careful supervision to the details of the work. This involves consultation with

the Executive Staff as to arrangement of offices; and with the architects of the Commission of Fine Arts as to architectural details of buildings and landscape.

Fortunately for the necessary expedition of the work, Mr. Eric Gugler, architect, has your confidence and also has the confidence of the members of this Commission. Moreover, he has full knowledge of the requirements as well as the skill and taste to meet them. At your suggestion, Mr. Gugler has had part in the conferences on this subject, and his assistance has been so valuable that unhesitatingly the Commission advises that his services be employed as the architect to design and supervise the work.

This Commission take the opportunity to acknowledge the services of Mr. Winslow, an architect of the Park and Planning Commission, whose studies have been very helpful in aiding to reach the conclusions herein presented. Lieut. Locke has given helpful guidance to the Commission.

The members of the Commission were both interested and gratified to hear directly from you a statement that you regarded these contemplated steps as answering an immediate need, and that you looked forward to the remodeling of the present State, War and Navy building in order to provide adequate, thoroughly dignified and convenient Executive Offices for the President of the United States.

For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Very respectfully,

(Signed) Charles Moore,

Chairman.

EXHIBIT A

The President,
The White House.

